

6

A

# LETTER

From the late

Arthur\* Colling\* Esq.

Anthony

TO THE

Rev<sup>d</sup>. Dr. Conger\* Middleton\*.

ON HIS

## EXAMINATION

OF THE

Lord Bishop of LONDON's *Discourses*  
*concerning the Use and Intent of Prophecy.*

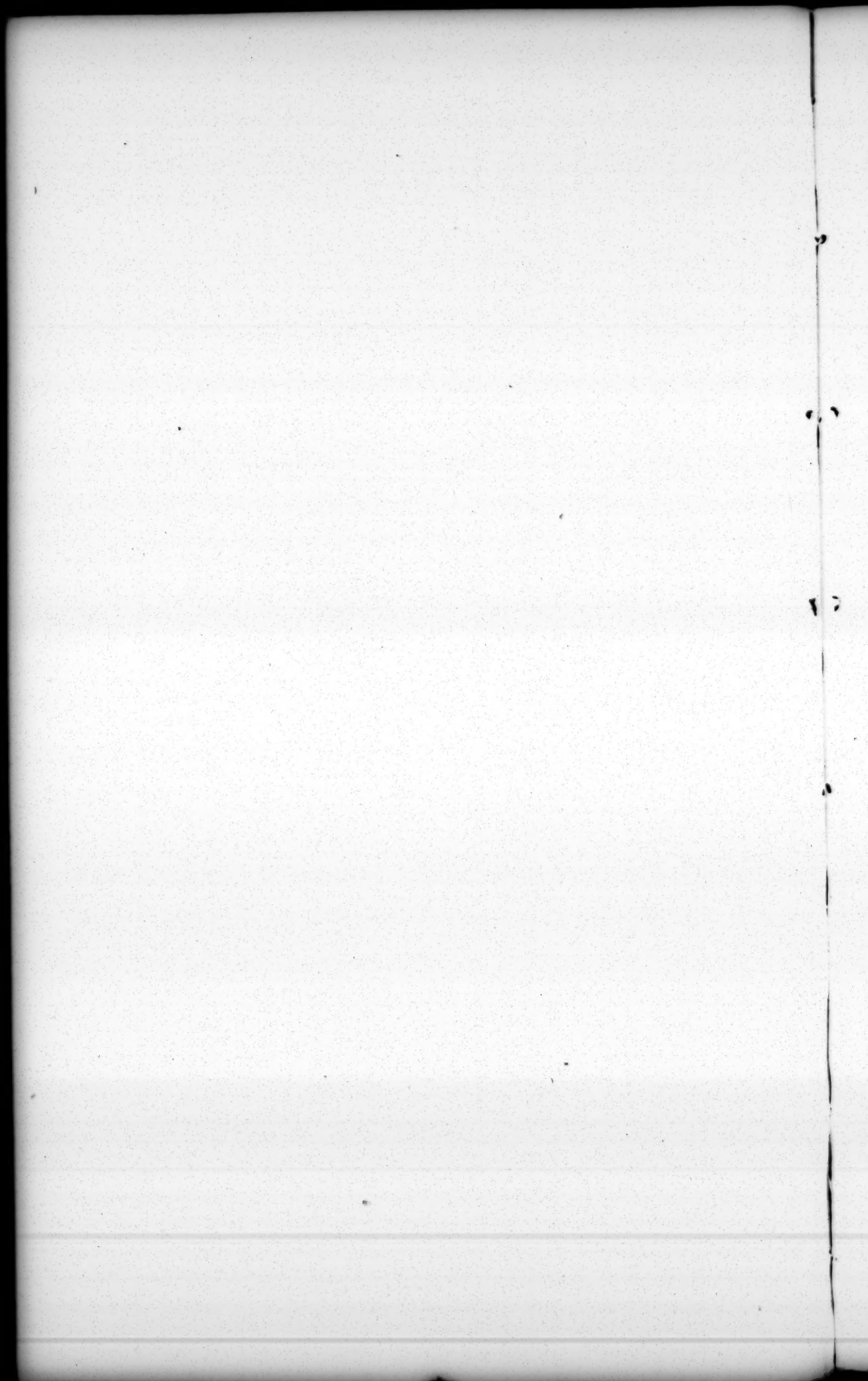
With some occasional References to the  
*Free Enquiry, &c.*



— Quæ gratia vivis,  
Quæ Cura —  
— eadem sequitur tellure repostos. VIRG.

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# P R E F A C E

O F T H E

E D I T O R.

**T**HE following Letter, having accidentally fallen into our Hands, is communicated to the Public, in hopes that it may be of some Use towards obviating the ill Impressions, which the *Pieces it refers* to are apt to

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make

ii      *P R E F A C E.*

make upon *unwary* Readers. If it contributes, in any measure, to this End, especially with such Persons, as have not Leisure or Inclination to peruse more *solid and elaborate* Answers, there will need no Apology for the Publication of it.

BUT there is likewise another good Purpose which *might* be served by it. It is heartily to be wished, that from such a View as this, of the *plain and natural Tendency* of those Pieces, the learned Author of them could be prevailed upon, either ingenuously  
to

P R E F A C E.      iii

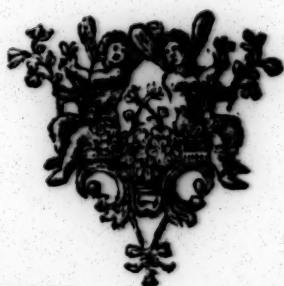
to retract, or sufficiently to explain, such Passages in them, as are readily caught at by *Unbelievers* in general, in order to make that *real Use* of them which is here *ironically feigned* of one of their principal Advocates.

T I L L the D——r has done this, and particularly till, upon the Article of Prophecy, he vouchsafes to produce (what, he intimates, he has a long Time had *prepared*) a *better Defence of the Gospel*, than That justly admired One, which he has thought fit to attack with so much Zeal  
and



iv      *P R E F A C E.*

and Animosity, he will have no Reason to complain, if his real Intentions, as a *Friend* to Revelation, should be *so greatly*, and *so generally* misunderstood.



A L E T-

( 1 )

A

# LETTER

FROM

A \* \* C \* \* Esquire

TO THE

Rev<sup>d</sup>. Dr. C \* \* M \* \*.

*Hades, Feb. 1, 1749.*

*Rev<sup>d</sup>. and dear Sir,*

**Y**OU will not, I dare say, be surprised at receiving a Letter from a Person, who has been dead some Years; and who, in his Life-time, had not the Happiness to be known to  
B you.

2      *A Letter from A\* C\* Esq.*

you. You well remember the natural and beautiful Sentiment in *Virgil*, which I have chosen for my Motto — “ That the Deceased, though they change their Place of Residence, do yet retain their old Affections and Desires ; and that whatever was the Object of their Zeal and Pursuit when living, continues to be so, after their Bodies are in the Grave.” As therefore it was my constant Business upon Earth, to do all I could, towards obstructing the Belief of the Gospel, you will easily imagine, that I have still the same Passion for Infidelity, that I had formerly ; and consequently, that I cannot but be *sollicitous* to know, how the good Cause goes forward, and extremely *glad* at every *fresh Advice* we receive of the successful Progress of it.

THE Truth is, we are not so great Strangers, here, to what passes in *your World,*



to the Rev. Dr. C\* M\*. 3

*World*, as some are apt to imagine. We have *now*, as in our Life-time, not only our little Clubs, and voluntary Societies, but our *General Assemblies* held by public Authority (a Privilege in *some* Countries not allowed even to the Clergy themselves) where we regularly meet, to consider of the State of *Irreligion*, and to consult upon proper Methods for the Support and Advancement of it. We have likewise our *Emissaries* in constant Waiting; whose Business it is, to bring us, from time to time, an authentic Account, how our Affairs stand in *England*; to inform us, what Converts, or new Allies we have got — what their Genius, Abilities, and Zeal for the Service—what Success and Encouragement they meet with from the Men in Power—and, particularly, to supply us with every Thing, *as it comes out*, that relates to the Controversy about the *Truth of the Gospel*,

B 2

and

4     *A Letter from A\* C\* Esq.*

and may be thought to deserve our Attention.

UNDER this Head, it is with great Satisfaction (as I am directed by our President to acquaint you) that we have been perusing your *Two last Pieces*, in which you have so notably exerted your self, with regard to the *main Supports* of it, *Miracles* and *Prophecy*: The Evidence of both which you have, with great Art and Dexterity, endeavoured *so to rest upon its proper Foundation*, as to leave it a Matter of doubt, with some sort of Persons, whether it has *any Foundation* at all.

THAT you *intended* this for our Service, we will not take upon us positively to affirm; because you have not hitherto (in which, we think, you do wisely) made any *open* or *explicit* Declaration in our Favour. But, whatever your real Sentiments

to the Rev. Dr. C\* M\*. 5

ments may be, at *present*, or what Reserve soever it may be expedient to act with, we hope, that a little more Time, and a very small Addition to the *Ill Usage* you have received, will bring you *intirely over*; especially, as we cannot help flattering ourselves, that you have already gone too far to recede; and that the *extraordinary* Steps you have lately taken, must naturally end in what we have long been wishing for and expecting.

IN the mean time, the Pleasure arising to us from this *seeming Tender of your good Offices* (for as such *at least*, we would willingly interpret, and thankfully embrace it) is very much heightened from the Consideration of *your Character*, and of the high Probability there is of its greatly contributing to the desired Effect.



WHEN we, who are Free-Thinkers by Profession (such as the *T-l-nds*, the *T-nd-ls*, the *M-rg-ns*, and the *Ch-bbs*) set ourselves to ridicule, and oppose the Gospel, the generality of Christians are apt to take the Alarm, and to be upon their Guard. They are in some Degree prejudiced against so much as *reading Works*, which they cannot help considering as so many *Designs upon their Peace and Happiness*; as Attempts calculated to rob them of what is most dear and valuable to them, the present Comforts of their Religion, and all their future Hopes from it. Not to take Notice of some *Disadvantages*, which *we* may possibly lye under, with regard both to our *moral* and *intellectual* Qualifications; whence some *Doubts* may arise with *thinking Men*, whether, whilst we are labouring with so much Earnestness to *run down* the

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to the Rev. Dr. C\* M\*. 7

the Religion of *Christ*, we have either Abilities or Inclination to set up any other, in the room of it.

BUT should a Person of Dr. M——'s Reputation for Parts and Learning; a Person not less remarkable for his strict Sobriety, than for his disinterested Search after Truth — should a Divine of the Church of *England*, — a zealous Espouser of the Protestant Cause — a Man, who has seen and read more than half his Brethren put together — who has been at *Rome* <sup>a</sup>, — and has talked with the

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<sup>a</sup> Some People may think this Ironical; but we rather take it to be a *serious Compliment*, intended by Mr. C — to signify, how *vastly superiour* Dr. M — must be to your “*little Archdeacons, who have conversed*” “*with nothing but their Books*, nor ever tra-

8    *A Letter from A\* C\* E/q.*

Pope <sup>b</sup>,—and has wrote the *Life of Cicero* in two *large* Volumes—a Man, who knows so much of the World, and values so little the Opinion of it, that he has *already* proved all the *antient Fathers* of the Church to be a Pack of K—s or F.—ls, and is *as* able, upon Occasion, to prove the *modern* ones to be not much better—Could we but once be so happy, as to get such a Champion as this on our Side, we cannot help expressing our Hopes, that *great Things might be effected*; and that even the *Theory of Christianity* (for the *Practice* of it hath

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“*velled further*, than from their College to “*Lambeth*.” See *Remarks* on two Pamphlets against the *Introd. Disc.*

<sup>b</sup> See the *Introductory Discourse* to the *Free Enquiry*, pag. 82.

been



been long declining) would soon come to be thought as *mere a Fable*, as you have shewn the *Historical Account of the Fall and Restoration of Man* to be (upon which it is grounded) and no longer deserving Credit amongst a *free and enlightened People*.

BUT if after all, Sir, we should possibly have *mistaken* your Intention ; if you can really be so weak, as sincerely and unfeignedly to believe the Gospel, and at the same Time imagine, that, from the Part you are now taking, either *Credit* or *Service* can accrue to it, we heartily beg your Pardon ; and can only plead, in our Excuse, that your *Manner of* writing, so *different*, as it *appears* to be, from that of a *professed Enemy* to Us, led us into *that Mistake* : and that, if we have been too sanguine in our Expectations, and should at last find ourselves disappointed

10     *A Letter from A\* C\* Esq.*

pointed of a Profelyte, the Presumption on our Part will, we hope, be the more readily forgiven, as it was purely owing to that Art of *perplexing, puzzling, and confounding* Things, so conspicuous in your Writings, which rendered it impossible for us, after the most diligent and thorough Examination of them, with Certainty to know,—either *where to have, or what to make of you.*

BUT we hope *better Things* of you, though we thus speak. Nor must I forget (whatever *Doubts* may be entertain'd of your sincere and steady Attachment either to *one* Side, or to the *other*) to express my Gratitude for the *undeniable* Obligations you have laid upon myself.

IT was surely a very kind and generous Part in you; a Mark of *uncommon*  
Friend-

Friendship, and Regard for my Memory, after I had been dead and buried, for so many Years, both in a literal and metaphorical Sense — when I had fairly *been wrote down*, without the Possibility (as it was thought) of a Reply; to raise me from the Obscurity in which I had so long slept, to start up, on a sudden, my Second in a stale, exploded Controversy, and with a Hardiness equally desperate and surprising \* (a Hardiness, that amazed every body but the few, who had heard

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\* “ The Reader may *perhaps* wonder, that  
“ these Discourses, which I am going to exa-  
“ mine, concerning *the Use and Intent of Pro-*  
“ *phesy*, published so many Years ago by Dr.  
“ *Sherlock*, now Bishop of *London*, and since  
“ corrected and enlarged by him in several  
“ successive Editions, should meet with a  
“ Censurer at last *so hardy*, as to call the Merit  
“ of them into Question.” *Exam.* pag. 1.

the



the Story of the *Cb—H—*) to fall upon and demolish the capital Work<sup>d</sup> of so eminent a Prelate as my Lord of *L—n*: A Work which for Five and twenty Years had stood the Test of public Examination; and (till *you* first happily discovered, that the Approbation it had met with, was not owing to any Merit of its own, but merely the Effect of a *blind Deference to the Authority of a great Name*<sup>e</sup>) had been as generally, as it was ignorantly, allowed to be one of the ablest and most masterly Defences of Christianity, as to the Points in question, that has appeared in any Age or Country, since the Foundation of it.

*THIS*, Sir, (to your Honour I repeat it) was striking a *bold Stroke* indeed;

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<sup>d</sup> *Exam.* pag. 4.

<sup>e</sup> *Exam.* pag. 8.

such a one, as cannot fail to deter every Writer of inferior Rank from entering the Lists with you. *This* was laying upon Us an Obligation, which we can never sufficiently acknowledge. What a Pleasure must it be to myself, and what a Comfort to my Bookseller, to think, that my dull Efforts against the Gospel (for dull must every Thing of *mine* appear, Sir, when compared with yours) will now have a probable Chance for a second Reading; nay perhaps, for a *second Edition!* What Matter of Triumph to our whole Fraternity, that the Objections I had raised, upon the Article of Prophecy, to the Disadvantage of the Christian Cause, are, even by a Christian Divine, allowed to be *unanswerable*<sup>f</sup>!

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<sup>f</sup> *Exam.* pag. 151.

BUT

14 *A Letter from A\* C\* Esq.*

BUT it is time for me to come more directly to the immediate Design of this Epistle; which was not so much to thank you in general Terms for the Service, we apprehend, you have done us, as to point out such particular Instances of your Address, *as pleased us most*, and wherein you have set an Example, worthy of the Imitation of all that shall come after you in the same laudable Design.

IF, at the same Time, we take the Liberty to give you some Hints for your *future* Conduct, and to caution you in a few Things of less Importance, wherein you seem to have been not quite so circumspect, as the Case required, we hope you will not interpret it as any Reflection upon your Judgment; since the wisest of Men have their Oversight; and since  
even



even your Adversaries must allow, upon their own Supposition, how extremely difficult it is, to sustain two opposite Characters, at one and the same Time, without offending, in point of Propriety, against either.

A N D, First, with regard to your *Capital Work*, the *Free Enquiry*, &c. we highly applaud your bringing the Credibility of the Miracles, pretended to be wrought in the Primitive Church after the Days of the Apostles, to the *Trial of our Reason and Senses* <sup>g</sup>. But why should so fair a *Trial* be limited to any particular Time? We see not, why the short Answer <sup>h</sup> you have given to *one* Instance,

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<sup>g</sup> *Pref.* to the *Enquiry*, pag. 9.

<sup>h</sup> “The Answer is clear and short, the *Fact* is not credible.” *Fr. Enq.* pag. 152.

16    *A Letter from A\* C\* Esq.*

may not equally serve to disprove *Others*, no Matter when, of as *surprising* a Nature. Let Men be so frank and open, as to make us but these two reasonable Concessions, 1. That no Force of Testimony can alter the Nature of Things<sup>i</sup>, or make that credible, which is in itself incredible; and 2. That every one has a Right to determine for himself, what Facts are credible, and what are not so: and 'tis *as much as we desire*. This alone will be sufficient (especially in this sceptical Age, wherein Few are so happy, *as to find themselves blest with that heroic Faith, which can remove Mountains*<sup>k</sup>)

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<sup>i</sup> *Pref. to the Enquiry*, pag. 9.

<sup>k</sup> *Free Enq.* p. 189. After which Words, immediately follows, “and beat down every “Obstacle, which Sense, or Reason, or Fact “can possibly oppose to it.” We hope this  
to

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to shake the Credit of many *strange Stories*, which have *long* passed currently for Truth, and been firmly believed by the wisest and most judicious Persons.

HOWEVER, though this Work of yours is, upon the Whole, highly to be commended, for that Freedom and Impartiality, with which you have treated the Characters of the Primitive Fathers; and sufficiently shews, how far you are *yourself* from paying a *blind Deference to the Authority of great Names*, and how much wiser, in that Respect, than the rest of Mankind; yet we cannot but take Notice of two or three Things, that have escaped you in it, which we could

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was not meant for a *Paraphrase* upon the Expression that goes before it.

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with



wish to have seen altered for the following Reasons.

1. WHEREAS, in answer to the Objection, "that the Authority of the  
"Books of the New Testament will, by  
"the Character you have given of the  
"Fathers, as chargeable with Craft or  
"Credulity, be rendered precarious and  
"uncertain," you calmly answer, *Who*  
*can help it?* This, we apprehend, was  
expressing somewhat too great an *Indiffer-*  
*ence* about the *Interests* of Christianity,  
and the *Consequences* of it to the Happiness  
of Mankind, for any one who would be  
thought in earnest to believe the *Truth*  
of it.

AS therefore it would be of great dis-  
service to us, to have it suspected, that  
you are in *our Way of thinking*, we could  
have wished, that no handle had been  
given

given for any Doubts of that kind, by a *Coolness* on a Matter of such Importance, which might, more prudently for yourself, as well as more kindly for us, have been concealed. Whoever is *our Friend*, and proposes any Advantage to us from his Writings, will find it absolutely necessary, to keep both his *Principles* and *Intention* out of Sight, as much as possible: Otherwise, be the Character of the Author ever so great, his Works will, in a very little time, be no longer read, nor any better esteemed, than those of my *fellow Labourers* above mentioned; but sink of course into that Oblivion and Contempt, which has been the *common* Fate of all *our* Performances; and to which some of the most celebrated of *yours*, for but the Appearance of an Affinity with them, are (to our no small Mortification) observed, even already, to be hastening apace.

WHAT Scruples some other Persons might have upon this Head, or how consistent they may think it with common Honesty, to intend one thing and to profess another, I know not. But for my own part I must freely declare, that I can see no Obligation we are under to carry our *Love of Truth*, and Concern for the Reception of it, so far *as to hurt ourselves*. This would, in my humble Opinion, be coming a little too near to the Spirit of Christianity, and to that false *Zeal for Suffering*, which you have so justly exposed, in the *Free Enquiry*<sup>1</sup>, as the leading Principle of some of the primitive Martyrs. You want not to be told, that

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<sup>1</sup> The extraordinary Zeal for Martyrdom, which shewed itself among the Primitive Christians, the Doctor tells us, may be accounted for from the following Motives.  
1. Obstinacy of Temper. 2. Love of Glory,  
the



the bare Suspicion of D—sm, however groundless, is *sometimes* looked upon, in a *Christian* Country, to be a sufficient Reason for excluding Men of the greatest Abilities from any Share of the Dignities and Preferments of the Church. When this happens to be the Case, every wise Man, who is so unfortunate as to think differently from the established

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or Reputation. 3. A Persuasion, that they should feel no Pain from their Sufferings. 4. An Expectation of extraordinary and distinguished Rewards in proportion to them. 5. and Lastly, the Impetuosity of a wild and extravagant Enthusiasm. But, after having largely illustrated each of these Particulars, he takes Care to acquaint his Readers, that it is *not his Design*, by what he has said on this Subject, *to detract in any manner* from the real Merit and just Praise of those Primitive Martyrs, who, with an invincible Constancy, sustained the Cause of *Christ*, at the Expence of their Lives. *Free En. p. 213.*

22     *A Letter from A\* C\* Esq.*

Tenets, will, for his own Sake at least, if not for other Considerations, keep his Sentiments to himself, unless, where, without Danger or Inconvenience, he may be at Liberty to discover them.

2. ANOTHER unguarded Expression, in the said Work, is that, wherein you speak of yourself, as *never trained to pace in the Trammels of the Church, nor tempted by the Sweets of its Preferments<sup>m</sup>, &c.* This,

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<sup>m</sup> *Pref. to the Free Enquiry*, p. 7. It was doubtless very fortunate for the Doctor, and “a Circumstance which, we readily believe, gives him Comfort, as oft as he reflects upon it,” that he never was put to the Trial of this dangerous Temptation: For who knows, what might have happened, if he had? But then, this very Circumstance, one would think, should dispose a Man of like Passions with his Brethren, to treat with Tenderness the Case of others, who, in the Freedom and Independency of their Situation, happen not to have  
it

it is apprehended, may let Readers, who might otherwise have been ignorant of it, into the *true Reason* of your engaging in Works of this kind, at *your Time* of Life; namely, that you have not been distinguished, according to your Merit, by *Those*, whose *Duty* it was, and (as it now appears) whose *Interest* likewise it would have been, more early to reward it. This at least is the Construction, which has been put upon that Passage by your Enemies, who take Advantage from it to insinuate, that both the *Enquiry* and *Examination*, and especially the latter, wholly took their Rise from *Pique* and *Disappointment*. For which single Reason, it is the Opinion of Us all, that

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been altogether so happy as himself; and to make *some Allowances* for the Disadvantages they lye under, “ whose *Credit and Fortune* “ (as he tells us) *depend* upon the Establishment “ of Error and Ignorance among Men.”



24 *A Letter from A\* C\* Esq.*

it had *better been omitted*. Not that we would be understood to condemn, or in the least discourage, a becoming *Pride*, or just *Resentment*, in *any Man*; much less in one of *your Cloth*—but only, we would not have it *seen through*; because that may be prejudicial upon *other Accounts*. You must be sensible, Sir, that when once a Man's Writings come to be looked upon as the Effect of *Spleen* or *Revenge*, they are no more regarded, than if they had *been wrote for Bread*. Satire itself, thus adulterated, will not go down. The Poignancy, which would have been relished, if natural and unmixed, becomes disagreeable and offensive, when *peccant Humours* discover themselves in the *Composition*, and are perhaps the *predominant Qualities* of it. Or, to speak more plainly, the Malignity of the Principles, from which such Writings proceed, not only weakens their Influence, but de-  
feats

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feats the very Intention of them. Add to this, that if a Suspicion of this kind should once generally prevail, it would go a great Way towards *lessening your Merit with your New Friends*. They would be apt to think themselves more beholden to the Oversight of the Bishops and Great Men, who should have *courted* you, than to any natural Disposition, or Conviction, of your own; or any real Regard for *them or their Cause*: and that, if it had *unluckily* happened, that you had been *listd in due Time*, you might, at this Day, have been as keen and determined an Adversary *to both*, as the *Stebbings*, the *Chapmans*, or any other bigotted Priests, whose Zeal for the Church and its Doctrines, is so amply compensated by the Preferments they enjoy in it<sup>n</sup>.

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<sup>n</sup> “ Like true Soldiers of the *militant* Church,  
“ prepared to fight for *any Establishment*, that

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THE last thing I have in charge to remind you of, as an *Error of Judgment*, is, that you have *stretched some Points a little too far*; at least farther, than, in the Opinion of your Friends, the Times will bear. For instance; though we highly approve of your turning the Historical Account of the Fall, as delivered by *Moses*, into a mere Fable, or *moral Apologue*, delivered after the Eastern Manner; and think you have been smart enough in Conscience upon the Bishop, for so *poorly supporting* ° the Charge, brought a-

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“ offers *such Pay* and Rewards to its Defenders.” *Pref. to the Free Enquiry*, p. 5.

° “ And this sort of Proof, grounded on a  
 “ Variety of fanciful Conjectures, forced Con-  
 “ structions, and incredible Facts, is the Sum  
 “ of what he has been able to collect, for the  
 “ Support of his fundamental Point, *That*  
 “ *the Devil was the Tempter of Eve.*” *Exam.*  
 pag. 169.

gainst



gainst the Devil, of being the original Author of all the Sin and Misery introduced into the World by the Disobedience of our first Parents : yet *absolutely to acquit him of it* <sup>p</sup>, we are afraid, as things stand, will be thought to be *overdoing it*. Especially as such an Acquital may, in the Consequences of it, be supposed to lead to a Denial even of the Reality of his *Existence*. We readily allow, that if by *rational Deduction* (which is the Method you seem to aim at) it could be *clearly made out*, that there neither is, nor ever was, such an Evil Spirit subsisting in the World, or that it is inconsistent with the Attributes of the Deity, “ *that God should*  
“ *expose the Simplicity of our First Pa-*  
“ *rents, unarmed and uninstructed, to the*  
“ *Assaults of an insidious Tempter, so*

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<sup>p</sup> Exam. pag. 106.

“ greatly

28 *A Letter from A\* C\* Esq.*

“ *greatly superior to them, both in Craft  
“ and Power* <sup>9</sup>,” it would considerably  
weaken the Authority of the Scriptures,  
which make such frequent and express  
mention of *him and his Devices*. But,  
notwithstanding this, *so long as the Scrip-  
tures are allowed to have any Credit,*  
we very much question, whether ever it  
will be possible to make out *either of these*  
Points to *general Satisfaction*. It is very  
plain, that, in the present Case, the Scrip-  
tures stand directly between you and the  
Bishop; so that, till the Bible is put down  
(which perhaps may *not happen* so soon as  
we could wish) every *Thrust* you make at  
him, must force its Way through *that*, be-  
fore it can reach him. *That Eve was deceiv-*

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<sup>9</sup> “ Since this was neither discoverable to  
“ their Reason, nor revealed to them by their  
“ Maker, *how can we imagine*, that God  
“ would expose,” &c. *Exam.* pag 106.

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ed by the Devil, though you may rank it among those Principles of Faith, which we are to receive upon the *Bishop's Authority*, or, as you elsewhere speak, "among the "absurd Conceits and Interpretations, "which Superstition, false Zeal, or the "Arts of political Churchmen have in "all Ages been ingrafting upon the Writ- "ings of *Moses*, and *imposing* upon all "Christians, as the fundamental Princi- "ples of their Religion<sup>r</sup>;" yet, I am afraid, it will appear to have been a Doctrine, long received in the Christian Church, upon the Authority of an *Apostle*<sup>s</sup>. If therefore *such Principles* as these will be *waging a perpetual War*

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<sup>r</sup> *Exam.* pag. 148.

<sup>s</sup> 1 *Tim.* ii. 14. And *Adam* was not deceived, but the *Woman* being deceived, was in the Transgression.

with



30     *A Letter from A\* C\* Esq.*

*with Reason* <sup>t</sup>, the only Way at present is, to let Faith and Reason fight it out. For, till the Quarrel is decided in Favour of the latter, no Deductions of Reason, be it ever so much on our Side, will be, I fear, thought valid enough to overthrow express Declarations of Scripture to the contrary. That such Principles of Faith *must either suppress Reason, or Reason will finally destroy them* <sup>u</sup>, we readily agree with you; and heartily wish, that every body else was of the same Opinion. But the contrary, you know, is held by some bigotted Churchmen; who think, there is no Necessity, that Faith and Reason should quarrel at all; but that they always have been, and always will be; very good Friends, whenever they come rightly to understand each other.

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<sup>t</sup> *Exam.* pag. 148.

<sup>u</sup> *Ib.*

YOU will perhaps wonder to hear me *objecting so much* to an Opinion, which, you must be sensible, we should all of us be glad to see *established*. But our Objection, Sir, is not to the *Opinion* itself, but to the *Propriety* of its coming from One, who is under a sort of Necessity of *appearing to believe* the Scriptures, whilst he is *arguing* from their *Testimony*. Our Regard for your Credit, and our Concern for the Success of your Labours, make us very solicitous that you appear *as consistent with yourself*, as your Character and Circumstances *will allow*. That you can be *wholly so*, is perhaps impossible; but you may so far at least *endeavour* it (which is all that I would be understood to mean) as to *avoid meddling with Revelation*, where it *directly* makes against you.

I would

I would by no means have you make yourself uneasy, Sir, at any thing I have hinted above, about your touching upon so tender a Point, as the *real Existence* of One, for whose Honour you will allow us to have a *decent* Concern. Whatever little Disgust might be taken upon that Head, you have effectually removed, and made sufficient amends for it, by your speaking so *slightly*, as you have done <sup>x</sup>, as well *of the Victory* over

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<sup>x</sup> “ *Strange Comfort* to an Inhabitant of  
 “ this World, which could not be felt or understood till the World itself should be no  
 “ more! And a *strange Sort of Victory*, which  
 “ left the Devil still insulting — a Victory,  
 “ which was not to take place, till the Enemy had scattered every Plague, and wrought  
 “ every Evil upon this Earth, which his Majesty could contrive, or his Power effect.”  
*Exam.* pag. 196. An admirable Comment upon 1 Cor. xv. 56. *Thanks be to God, &c.*  
 him;



him (predicted at the Fall and explained in the New Testament) as of the standing *Comfort*, arising to true Believers from the certain Expectation of it. For, of what Advantage to Mankind can be any Triumph, *at so great a Distance as the Day of Judgment?* Or what real Comfort can a Prophecy administer, *the Benefit of which evaporates into Air*<sup>1</sup>, the moment it is expressed in figurative, or metaphorical Language?

YOUR adjourning all further Disputes about this Prophecy, to that last and awful Day<sup>2</sup>, and the Desire you have expressed, to have all Disputes of that kind *so adjourned*, is not less acceptable, than it is judicious; especially, if extended as far as it will bear. For if, as you observe, it

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<sup>1</sup> Exam. pag. 195. <sup>2</sup> Ib. p. 197.

is that Day alone, that can determine the real Character, not only of *this*, but of *all other pretended Prophecies, Inspirations, and Revelations of the Will of God*<sup>a</sup>; the natural Inference from it seems plainly to be what you intimate, that it is a *needless Trouble or vain Contest*, to be examining and disputing, in *the mean time*, about them. If so, since *then only* can be decided, whether the Christian Revelation itself be true or false, why may it not be thought soon enough for Men to consider, whether they shall embrace or reject it, when they are summoned to appear before *his* Judgment Seat, from whom, as we are told, they shall receive their Sentence?

WE beg Pardon, if we do not rightly understand, or fully comprehend your Scheme; but, in the Light we view it,

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<sup>a</sup> *Exam.* pag. 197.

it seems to be bespeaking a Neutrality at least as to *Articles of Faith*, upon what Authority soever the Revelation of them may be grounded, and making the Whole of Religion to consist in those  
“ practical, social, and real Duties, which  
“ our *Reason and Senses* prescribe in common to all Men, as the chief Good of  
“ their Nature, and the Source of all their  
“ Happiness, both here and hereafter<sup>b</sup>.”  
If this be what you aim at, we have nothing to object to it ; as thinking it will be highly conducive to the Benefit of Mankind, and an excellent Expedient to set them free from many unnecessary Restraints which the Gospel lays upon them, and chiefly from the intolerable Imposition of Priests and Priestcraft, by the Abuse and Misapplication of it.

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<sup>b</sup> *Exam.* pag. 198.



I Have now, Sir, gone through the disagreeable Part of my Task, which was to point out some Slips of your Pen, of which an *ill Use*, we apprehended, might be made to our *common Disadvantage*. What remains will be more acceptable to us both; and is intended to signify to you our Approbation of your Conduct in such Particulars, as we would recommend it to you to persevere in, and, if possible, to improve.

1. LET all your future Writings be distinguished, as some of your late ones have been, by a more than ordinary Zeal for the Protestant Religion. This will shelter you from the Calumnies of those, who would represent you as an Enemy to the Religion you profess. For though to some it may appear a Mystery, how any Attempt, which may prove *hurtful to Christianity*

*Christianity* in general, can be for the Service of *Protestantism*, which is one particular Branch of it; yet it must be thought altogether as unaccountable, how *Christianity can be hurt*, so long as the *Protestant* Religion is secured and strengthened. Since therefore to destroy all Belief of Miracles wrought after the Apostles Days, is the sole Expedient, which can effectually defeat the Efforts of Rome, though it should be admitted, that this may affect the Credit of those recorded in the New Testament, yet it must be granted at the same time, that what the *Christian Religion* loses by this on the one Hand, the *Protestant* Religion is sure to gain on the other. So that upon the Whole there is no Harm done; nor can you, without Injustice, be charged with any sinister Designs upon the former, whilst the latter is indeed so considerable a Gainer by it. Such Imputations upon your Character must pals

with every one (who is able to see more things than one at once, and to weigh them against each other) for the base Artifices of *fierce Bigots, hypocritical Zealots, and interested Politicians*. And the more strenuous you shew yourself in the *Protestant Cause*, the baser and more injurious must such Imputations appear.

2. BE sure to keep up that sovereign Contempt, which you have hitherto expressed, of all whom you have wrote against or who have presumed to write against you. Let their Rank and Reputation be what it will, 'tis your Business to depress *their* Characters, and to raise *your own*. In order to this, fail not to load them, or their Performances, with as much Invektive and Abuse as you can handsomely put together. Let there be but *Plenty* <sup>c</sup> enough

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<sup>c</sup> That the Doctor has not been wanting in *either* of these Respects, will appear from the  
and



to the Rev. Dr. C\* M\*. 39

and *Variety* of it, and I will answer for the Success of it.

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following Specimens, which may not improperly be called

Dr. M——n's Answer to the L<sup>d</sup>. B——p of L——n's Discourses, &c.

Part I. Containing some *Flowers of his Rhetoric*.

(N. B. Part II. Containing the *Force of his Reasoning*, will be found in the Appendix or additional Note.)

I found this capital Work of his Lordship to be just such as I expected; exhibiting a Species of Reasoning peculiar to himself, ever subtil and refined, yet never convincing; and proper rather to perplex, than to illustrate the Notion of Prophecy, and to amuse, rather than instruct an inquisitive Reader. *Ex.* p. 4.

— An *imaginary Scheme*, of which I had not discovered the least Trace in any of the Four Gospels. p. 5.

D 4

I should

I Should not indeed, as a *Gentleman*,  
recommend *this Method* (nor do I sup-

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— A *romantic* System, or fanciful Chain  
of *Antediluvian* Predictions. *Ib.*

— Wholly fallacious and sophistical, with-  
out either Force or Sense in it. p. 39.

— An empty Strain of Rhetoric, without  
any Argument or Significancy in it whatso-  
ever. p. 60.

— A vain and impertinent Fancy, which  
has no *sort* of Relation to the Evidence of  
the Gospel. p. 98.

— A perplexed, hypothetical, inconsistent  
Piece of Sophistry. p. 160.

— A Remnant of the same flimsy Stuff.  
p. 183.

— A fine-spun Web of fantastical Whims, and  
precarious Suppositions, worked up together  
into some Resemblance of Arguments. p. 183.

— Fitter to be ranked among the *Dreams*  
of *Visionaries* and *Enthusiasts*, than considered  
pose

pose, you would yourself have employed it so frequently in the *Examination*) but for

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as the Suggestions of sober Sense and Reason. p. 137.

—A mere Quibble, which tends rather to confute than support what he intends to establish. p. 65.

—Till by the Help of that Confusion he may *shuffle* his own Sense upon us. p. 139.

—And thus a Prophecy is *cook'd* up. p. 139. And

-- He had seen, that his *Nonsense* would go down. p. 8.

(More might be added, but we believe the Reader has enough of it.) Upon the *obvious Implication* of all which polite and elegant Phrases, the *Consistency* of them with common Decency, or good Manners, and the *Propriety* of them with regard either to the Character of the Author animadverted upon, or the Purpose of his Book, we shall make no other Reflection than this, That the Doctor may well  
*another*



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*another* good Reason, *viz.* the want of a better. When a well-bred Author, especially in a Dispute with his Superiors, has recourse to such Language, as in more vulgar Writers would be termed Scurrility, it is generally accounted for, upon one of these two Suppositions; either, that, at the time, he was under the Influence of some strong, though latent, Passion, which hurried him into a Forgetfulness, both of himself, and his Situation; or else, that he was absolutely at a loss for more convincing Arguments. Of the first of these you will not, by those who know you, be readily suspected. As to the latter, it may fairly be allowed; and is the very Plea that

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talk of the *public Patience*, *Exam.* p. 8. For if this does not *sufficiently try it*, it will be hard to say, what will. Let his *greatest Admirers* read it, if they can, without blushing for him !

must

to the Rev. Dr. C\* M\*. 43

must be urged in your Defence. You had, in short, *no other way for it*. We, who are under the Disadvantage of combating established Opinions, and who consequently have an Enemy to engage, that is in Possession of the Artillery<sup>d</sup>, are obliged to make use of such Weapons as we can procure. Accordingly, whenever it has been found, that *fair Reasoning* could be of no Help to us, it has always been *our Practice* (and the Necessity of the Case, as well as Custom immemorial, we presume, will *justify* it) to borrow what Assistance we can from *Railing*.

AGAIN: Bold and confident Assertions, especially when enlivened with some sprightly Turn, and delivered in

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<sup>d</sup> We suppose, that by this Expression is meant, Truth, Reason, Common Sense, and Experience, &c.

smooth

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smooth and entertaining Language, will go much farther, and answer the Purpose better, especially with *our Friends* (who, between you and I, are generally more remarkable for the *Freedom*, than for the *Depth* of their Thinking) than solid and substantial Arguments. And this we take to be the true Reason, why we meet with so very *few* of that kind in your Writings. For why should you give yourself a *needless* Trouble? You know what sort of People make up the Bulk of your Readers and Admirers. Many of them there are, who will not *be at the Pains* to examine the Force of your Reasoning; which is (as indeed it should be) not always of the clearest kind. And there are still more, who are *incapable* of doing it, if they *would*. For such as these it is sufficient, if, after a few Pages scribbled over for your own Amusement (in which *any thing*, or *nothing*, may be worked up into some Re-  
sem-



semblance of an Argument) you acquaint them at the Conclusion, *what it is you have been doing*; which otherwise, perhaps, the acutest of them may be at a Loss to discover. Tell them but, at proper Intervals, — what Points you have made out, and what you have confuted<sup>e</sup>, and take Care withal to do it (as indeed you generally do) in strong Words, and with an Air of Triumph and Self-Approbation, and they have all the Satisfaction they want or desire.

OTHERS again there are, who come to the Perusal of your Works with full *Hopes* and Expectation of *finding* that proved, which they have long *wished* to have so. These also will readily

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<sup>e</sup> That the Reader may better judge of the Force of Dr. M—'s *Reasoning*, and of his *Manner of Confuting*, we must refer him to  
take

*take your Word* for the Truth of such Discoveries, as they feel agreeable to them. They come prepared with an Appetite, and swallow down at once whatever gratifies their Ill-nature, or strengthens their Prejudices. For the single Point with such, is, *What* you prove, not *How* you prove it. You have proved *what they like*; and that is enough. Upon all these Accounts, we greatly applaud the Resolution you seem to have taken, and have hitherto kept, of adapting your Style and manner to the *Taste of your* Readers; or at least of that *Part* of them, whose Approbation, we hope, you *chiefly* value.

3. A Fling now and then at a Bishop or a Churchman, in his *political* Capa-

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the additional Note at the End of this Letter; it being thought too long to be inserted here, in its proper Place.

city,

city, you have shewn not to be without its Use, and generally to have a good Effect. By this Method you artfully engage on your Side such of your Readers, as happen to be of different Sentiments, as to *Politics*, from the Person you are opposing; and, what is still more, of *all those* (and they are not *a few*) who think, that Churchmen have no Business to meddle with Affairs of State *at all*. The Words, *Political* and *Systematic*, though innocent enough of themselves, you very well know, when tacked to the Word, *Divine*, give no very favourable Idea of the Person they are applied to. How this comes about, or what proper Reason can be assigned, why a *Capacity to assist in the public Councils, which he is called to attend*, or the having a *uniform and consistent Scheme of the Doctrines, which he professes to believe and teach*, should be Matter of Reproach to a *Churchman*, more than



than to any other Person, is no Business of yours or mine to enquire. 'Tis enough that Custom and vulgar Prejudice have brought the Terms, that express these Things, into *Disrepute*. And if, by the Help of that Prejudice, we can cast an *Odium* upon our Adversaries, or in any Degree prepossess the Public to their Disadvantage, I think, we ought to neglect no Opportunity of doing it, that falls in our Way. To speak our Minds freely, you have been a little too sparing, upon this Article, in the *Examination*; having, in the whole Length of a Work of near two hundred Pages, but *twice*, as I remember, brought in the Words, *Political Churchmen*, and *Political and Systematic Divines*; whereas you might as easily, and full as pertinently, have done it *Twenty* times, if not more.

4. YOUR

4. YOUR Use of ludicrous Expressions, upon grave and serious Subjects, such as—*keeping the Devil always out of Sight, and behind the Curtain as it were,*—the introducing him *in Masquerade, or the Dress of a Serpent,—intrapping our Lord, and drawing the Secret of his Messiahship out of him,*—with some others of the same kind, will be of great Service to Wits and Free-thinkers, and a ready Help to them in Conversation, whenever they are disposed, at a Coffee-house, or over a Bottle, or in a Dispute with a Country-P—n, to divert themselves with Scripture-History. Such ingenious Conceits as these (the familiar Use of which we earnestly recommend to you, for the following Reason) are quickly *got by heart*, and as readily repeated: and if they can but help to raise a Laugh, and to expose Revelation to Contempt and

E

Ridi-

Ridicule, they answer the Purpose, for which, we hope, they were intended.

5. BUT of all the happy Contrivances, which you have hit off, for the Amusement and Diversion of our Friends, we think nothing comes up to that of *playing off Christian Divines against each other*. By this Means, in the first Place, you *benefit* yourself of *the Authority* of him you like best; and can at any time have the Advantage of *two to one*. For it is not every one that can discover, that Dr. *Spencer's* Opinion is no more a *Confutation* of Dr. *Sherlock's*, than Dr. *Sherlock's* is of his<sup>s</sup>. But this is not all; you may so order and dispose them, that such Opinions, as, considered in their proper Pla-

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<sup>s</sup> “How different a Character is this, from what Dr. *Spencer* has given of the same “Prophecies,” &c. *Exam.* p. 83.



ces, and with a reference to the Author's View and Design, have *Sense and Meaning*, and perhaps a *tolerable Support*, shall (like some Chemical Preparations, which evaporate upon mixture) merely by being brought together, appear to have neither.

THE excellent Use that may be made of this Practice, you have exemplified in an Instance, which must at once both greatly edify, and entertain your Readers. The Instance I mean, is that *long-controverted* Text of St. Peter, upon which you have spent so many Pages to overthrow the *Bishop's* Sense of it, and to confirm mine, and at last to leave it without any Sense at all ; a Point, which, we doubt not, you had in view from the Beginning. For the Result of the Opinions which you have collected upon this Head, and the Use you have made of them, stand in this manner. Let it be in-

finuated in the first place, upon the Authority of Dr. *Lightfoot*, that the Voice of God, which *Peter* heard at the Glorification of *Christ* upon the Mount, was that inferior kind of Oracle, which succeeded to the Spirit of Prophecy, and which, as *Grotius* says, was the sole Oracle that remained to the *Jews*, during the Time of the second Temple, and went under the name of *Bath-Kol*, or the Daughter of a Voice—Let it be granted, in the second Place, both upon *his* and your own Authority, that *as such* it was understood by *Peter* himself, who, for *that very reason*, in his Epistle to the *Jewish* Converts, prefers the ancient Prophecies before it, and recommends them as a *surer Foundation*, whereon to build their Faith, than *even a Voice from Heaven*—And lastly, let it be shewn, from the Authority of Dr. *Spencer* and Dr. *Prideaux*, that the whole Story of this  
same

same *Bath-Kol* was nothing else but a mere Fiction, or *Jewish* Fable, contrived to illustrate the Characters and Authority of some leading *Rabbies*, and recommend the particular Doctrines they were establishing—Let these things be put together, and duly considered, and how finely does it *turn out upon the whole?* and what a Stir and Pother appears to have been raised, for so many Years, in the Christian Church, about a Controversy, which ends in—Nothing!

BUT I forget, Sir, that I am trespassing upon your Patience, by repeating what you are so much better acquainted with, than we are. I shall no longer take up *that* Time, which we hope is at present as laudably and usefully employed, as it has been for some Years past. I cannot however conclude, without giving you one Hint more, which deserves your serious



Consideration. You have more than once <sup>f</sup> declared in the *Examination*, that how little Satisfaction soever the Bishop, or any other Person, has been able to give (with regard to the Difficulties, with which I had pressed the Argument from Prophecy) by *evasive Expedients*, or *fanciful Systems*, you have yourself, at this Time, by you, and have had for some Years, a natural and obvious Solution of them; which you may *probably* give the Public, at some occasion hereafter of more leisure. Now, whether you really intend any such thing; or whether you said this, only to save Appearances (that you might not seem to *leave things desperate*, or absolutely to give up the Cause to us) or whether you had a mind to let the World know, what you *could* do for Christianity, if you *would*; it is the ear-

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<sup>f</sup> *Exam.* pag. 153. 25.

nest and unanimous Request of all your Friends here, that this Performance (the Appearance of which we *dread*) may be, if not finally suppressed, at least deferred, as long as it can. We speak not this altogether for our *own* Sake, but for yours also. Why should you be in any haste, Sir, to defend the Gospel? What has the Gospel, or any of the Professors of it, done for you? It is well known, that you are more beholden for the Easiness of your present Circumstances, and the comfortable Subsistence which you now enjoy, to one poor Heathen Orator, than to all the Pr—ts and Ap—s put together. Let me intreat you, therefore, to let this Matter sleep with you, *as it has already slept for so many Years*, for a few Years longer. You don't know what Mischief it may do. My objections against the Evidence of Prophecy, as applied in the New Tes-

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tament, you allow to have hitherto been *unanswered*, nay you have yourself taken great pains to *confirm* and *strengthen* them; why should you *undo all*, by going about at last to confute and expose them? Why should you do *that* for the B—ps and Clergy, which, you see, none of them are able to do for themselves? Nay indeed, how *can* you answer, without contradicting yourself, what you have already so *honestly* and so *publickly* confessed to be *unanswerable*?

I conclude with the Compliments of our Society; and, once more thanking you for the particular Honour you have done to my self, am,

*Rev<sup>d</sup>. Sir,*

*Your most obliged, and*

*Most obedient humble Servant,*

A. C.



P O S T S C R I P T.

**T**HOUGH we are very glad to learn *from yourself*, that your Works are every where *so favourably received*, both among the Clergy and Laity; yet we cannot but be impatient to know, whether any Notice has been taken of them by *either of the Universities*. Some Testimony of *their* Approbation would be of *signal Service*, if it could be obtained. But of this, we must confess, that we are somewhat diffident in our Expectations. Especially as you have told us (and it is impossible you should be mistaken in *so clear a Point*) that the *true Motives*, by which your Opposers have been urged to declare themselves against your Opinion, were “the Hopes of those  
“Honours, which they had seen others  
“acquire,

58 *A Letter from A\* C\* Esq. &c.*

“acquire, by former Attacks upon you <sup>h</sup>.”

Howeve, if this should again happen to be the Case <sup>i</sup>, or if the same Methods should *always* be attended with the same Success, let it not discourage you, so long as you are secure of the intire Approbation of those, *whose Authority you chiefly value.*

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<sup>h</sup> *Pref. to the Enq. p. 3.*

<sup>i</sup> One would be apt to think, from this Passage, that Mr. C— had *really foreseen* the handsome Compliment, lately paid, by the University of *Oxford*, to the great Merit of two reverend Gentlemen (Dr. *Dodwell* and Dr. *Church*) who had eminently distinguished themselves by their Writings *against the Free Enquiry*, in conferring upon them the highest Honour, which it is in the Power of that venerable and learned Body to confer.

Additional

## Additional Note <sup>k</sup>.

**T**HAT the Reader may better judge of the Force of Dr. *M—n's* Reasoning, and of his *Manner of confuting* the Opinions he dislikes, we shall here exhibit a short Account of the Controversy revived by him, and the *Conclusion* to which, he tells us he has brought it.

ABOUT five and twenty Years ago, a Book was published by Mr. *C—ns*, entitled, *The Grounds and Reasons, &c.*

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<sup>k</sup> This Note, but for the length of it, should have been inserted p. 45. It contains a *serious*, and, we hope, a *sufficient* Answer to the Examination, so far as the *argumentative Part* of it is concerned; which falls, in Truth, within a *very narrow* Compass. All *the rest* of it has been *properly* answered, and in such a manner, as, we think, it *deserves*, by the Letter itself.

where,



wherein he had ridiculed the Prophecies of the Old Testament, which are cited in the New, as *trifling and impertinent*, and bearing no sort of Relation to the particular Cases or Persons, to which they are applied.

TO this Book several Answers were made, and particularly an excellent one by Bishop *Candler*, wherein the several Objections of the Author were with great Learning and Accuracy examined and refuted. About the same time Dr. *Sherlock*, the present Bishop of *London*, published six Discourses (which had been delivered by him at the *Temple Church*) at the Desire of the Masters of the Bench of the two honourable Societies: not by way of *Answer to the Grounds and Reasons*<sup>1</sup>, but

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<sup>1</sup> “ That the Reader may not be deceived,  
“ it is proper to tell him here, that he is NOT  
with

with a View of shewing the *Use and Intent* of Prophecy, in the *several Ages* of the World, and the manifest *Connection* between the *Prophecies* of every *Age*. These Discourses, *though they have passed through many Editions, not only*, as the Doctor generously allows, *without Reproof*, but with *some Degree* even of Approbation<sup>m</sup>, he has however, for certain Reasons, best known to himself, taken upon him, **THUS L'ATE**, to examine and censure; and, if you will take his own Word for it,

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“ TO EXPECT, in the following Discourses, an  
 “ Answer to a Book, lately published, entitled, *Grounds and Reasons*, &c. — That  
 “ Work was undertaken, and has been discharged to the Satisfaction of the Publick,  
 “ by a much abler Hand.” *Preface to the Discourses.*

<sup>m</sup> *Exam.* p. 8.

has

has *thoroughly confuted* them. And lest the Public should be surpris'd at the Unseasonableness, as well as the Boldness of such an Attempt, he endeavours to abate their Wonder, by a Declaration, which to many may appear equally surprising. "The Truth is (says he) I had never read them till very lately, or otherwise these Animadversions might have made their Appearance probably much earlier."

THE Title of these Animadversions is *An Examination of the Lord Bishop of London's Discourses, concerning the Use and Intent of Prophecy*. Where it is worthy of Observation, that the Doctor has artfully sunk upon his Readers a very *material Part* of the Title of the Bishop's Book, viz. the Words, *in the several Ages of the World*. Otherwise, it must have been discovered, at first Sight, that  
He,



He, and his Principal Mr. C—s, had been writing of *one thing*, and the Bishop of *another*; and therefore, that the Pains that he has taken to shew, that Mr. C—s had not considered those Prophecies in any other Method, nor under any other Character, than that, in which they were considered by the Evangelists themselves, is wholly impertinent, and foreign to the Bishop's Design; which was not, to consider the Application made, of some *particular* Predictions, by the Writers of the New Testament, to the Person of *Christ*; but *what End* the Wisdom of God proposed to serve by *Prophecy in general*, and how *this End* has been served by it <sup>a</sup>.

But to let this pass, and come directly to the Point. His Confutation of the

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<sup>a</sup> *Discourses*, p. 49.

Bishop, when he comes to sum up his Arguments, is built upon these two Facts.

“ F I R S T, that both *Christ* and his  
“ Apostles, in preaching the Gospel to the  
“ *Jews*, took all Occasions of applying  
“ the Prophecies of the Old Testament,  
“ singly and separately, to each remarkable  
“ Circumstance of the Life and Ministry  
“ of *Jesus*, as so many direct and decisive  
“ Proofs of his Mission. And this (says  
“ he) *confutes at once* the general Argu-  
“ ment of his Lordship’s two first Dis-  
“ courses: The Purpose of which is, to  
“ shew, that the Scripture Prophecies were  
“ never intended, to be a very distinct Evi-  
“ dence; and, if considered singly, are in-  
“ capable, from the Nature of them, of  
“ affording any satisfactory Proof, when  
“ they come to be confronted with the  
“ Objections of Unbelievers °.

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° *Exam.* p. 97.

BUT

BUT this is a very partial and unfair Representation. The general Argument of those Discourses is this. That the *ancient Prophecies* in general are confessedly obscure: But yet, 1. *Not obscurer* than God designed they should be; who is not obliged to give us farther Light and Information about things future, than he thinks fit. Nor yet, 2. *So obscure*, as not to answer the Ends for which they were given. Which Ends were, 1. To support Religion in the World, and to be a Foundation of Hope towards God, *to them to whom they were delivered*; and 2. To be an Evidence of his Truth, to *them who should see the Completion of them*, and to *the Ages after them*.—That accordingly both these Ends were answered by them. Religion was supported, and the Predictions, in particular, relating to the *Messiah* or promised Redeemer,



how obscurely soever expressed, were *truly and properly* fulfilled in *Jesus Christ*, of whom they had been foretold, and to whom, in the New Testament, they are applied. This is the Substance of the Bishop's Argument taken all together, as it ought to be. And how all this *is confuted at once*, by the Fact abovementioned—and whether that very Fact is not a *Part* of what is here maintained, — or with what Justice his Lordship is elsewhere charged by the Examiner, with *lessening, depressing, and depreciating* the Evidence of Prophecy, and putting the Predictions of the Old Testament upon a level with the Oracles of the *Pythian Apollo*, let the Reader determine for himself; since it would be an Affront to his Understanding, to say any thing farther about it.

THE

THE second Fact, upon which the Doctor builds his Confutation, is, “ That  
 “ the Evangelists, in collecting all the  
 “ Prophecies, which they imagined to  
 “ relate to *Jesus*, never looked for them  
 “ any *higher, than to the Law and the*  
 “ *Prophets*; nor ever appealed to any  
 “ other, than what they found there; fol-  
 “ lowing herein the Example of their  
 “ Master, who in expounding all the pro-  
 “ phetic Scripture, which were applicable  
 “ to himself, *began with the Prophecy of*  
 “ *Moses*. Which Fact *confutes likewise*  
 “ *at once* the grand Scheme of his four  
 “ remaining Discourses, and shews his  
 “ pretended *Chain of Antediluvian Pro-*  
 “ *phcies*, to be a vain and impertinent  
 “ Fancy, which has no sort of Relation  
 “ to the Evidence of the Gospel °.”

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• *Exam.* p. 98.

IN answer to which it may be observed, that here are several Things taken for granted, which will not easily be proved. Part of what is advanced is mere Fallacy, and part of it absolutely false.

FIRST, it is taken for granted, that the Evangelists collected all the Prophecies, which they imagined to relate to *Jesus*. This, in the only Sense wherein it can affect the Bishop's Argument, is *not true*. They may indeed have collected all that they thought necessary to prove to the *Jews*, who *expected a Messiah*, that *Jesus* was *that Messiah* whom they looked for : But they had no Occasion to collect, and therefore did not collect, those, which promised a *Redeemer from the Beginning of the World*. A Point, which they did not want to be convinced of.



SECONDLY, It is taken for granted, that by *beginning at Moses*, must be understood beginning at *the Time*, or with the *Prophecy at Moses*. But there is no Necessity for so understanding that Expression. The Words of the Evangelist, alledged for the Proof of this, are, *that, beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself*. It is highly probable then, that by *Moses* we are to understand the *Books of Moses*; as *Luke xvi. 29. They have Moses and the Prophets*. For if there are evidently in those Books, and particularly in the First of them, *other Prophecies concerning him*, besides that in *Deut. xviii. 15*. which, the Doctor says, he began with, how could he, without taking Notice of *them also*, be properly said to have expounded, *in all the Scriptures, the*

things concerning himself? And the Presumption is much stronger that he did so, than otherwise ; because we find him, in a Discourse with the *Jews*, particularly applying to himself the Prophecy, or Promise made to *Abraham* in the Book of *Genesis*, that *in his Seed all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*. John viii. 56<sup>a</sup>.

THIRDLY, It is taken for granted, that by the *Law*, we are to understand only that particular Part of the *Pentateuch*, which is properly so called. But does not the Apostle expressly call the Book of *Genesis* the *Law*, Gal. iv. 21. and can the Doctor be so ignorant, as not to know, that *the Law and the Prophets* was the common Name among the *Jews*, of all the canonical Books of the Old Testament? But,

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<sup>a</sup> See also *Acts* iii. v. 25. where Prophecy is referred to *Jesus* by St. *Peter*.

FOURTHLY,

FOURTHLY, Admitting it could be proved, that neither *Jesus* nor his *Apostles*, in preaching to the *Jews*, took any notice of those Prophecies in *Genesis*, wherein a Promise of the blessed Seed was made first to *Adam*, then to *Shem*, then to *Abraham*, afterwards to *Jacob*, and lastly, limited (and the precise Time of his Appearance likewise foretold) to the tribe of *Judah*; will it therefore follow,—that there are *no such Prophecies in it*, contrary to the express Evidence of the Book itself, and to the concurrent Sense both of the *Jewish* and Christian Churches in all Ages, concerning it? — or, that those Prophecies have no Connection with each other, and with the Prophecies of succeeding Ages till the Time of Christ—or that such Connection is improperly urged against modern Unbelievers, to shew, how improbable it is,



that a Chain of Prophecies reaching through several thousand Years, delivered at different Times, yet manifestly subservient to one and the same Administration of Providence, from Beginning to End, should be the Effect of Art and Contrivance, and religious Fraud ? ?

THIS was his Lordship's Design, in considering the Evidence from Prophecy, in this *extensive* View of it. And can that be said to have *no sort of Relation* to the Evidence of the Gospel, as a Divine Revelation, which sets this Argument in so strong and advantageous a Light? Or rather, does not the *forcible Conviction*, arising from this View of it, *greatly overbalance* all the Difficulties, with which Unbelievers, at this Time,

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? *Pref. to the Discourses.*

are

are able to press some particular Prophecies, and the Application of them made by Writers, who lived many hundred Years ago, and who had many ancient Books and Records of the *Jewish* Church, from which they drew many Passages, and perhaps some Prophecies; which Books we have not, to enable us to understand, and to justify their Applications?

FROM what has been said, it appears plainly, that the general Argument of his Lordship's Discourses is so far from being *confuted at once*, as the Examiner vainly boasts, by the Facts he has laid down for that Purpose, that it is not *in any Degree whatsoever affected* by them. Nor consequently is the *Merit of* them, or the great Character they have so long

maintained, at all impaired, by any thing which he hath hitherto been able to advance against them: Nor, if we may judge of what is to follow by what we have seen already, *ever will be*, by any *future Examination*, which he may *probably* give us of the rest of them, and of the learned *Dissertations* which are added to them. This however, (tho' intimated *in terrorem*) as the Public, we believe, will be under no impatience for it, nor he himself gain greater Credit by it, than he has done by the *present*, he has prudently *reserved to some Occasion hereafter of more Leisure* <sup>r</sup>.

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<sup>r</sup> *Exam.* p. 153.

**F I N I S.**



